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New York

*President*: Ms. Al-Khalifa ..... (Bahrain)

*In the absence of the President, Mr. Al-Murad (Kuwait), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.*

**Agenda item 44 *(continued)***

**Culture of peace**

**Note by the Secretary-General (A/61/175)**

**Draft resolutions (A/61/L.11 and A/61/L.16)**

**Mr. Zaki** (Pakistan): Today we are considering the important agenda item entitled "Culture of peace". We are grateful to the Secretary-General for his report on this item contained in document A/61/175. Pakistan has had a long-standing association with this subject and has endeavoured to promote a culture of peace through its traditional resolution entitled "Promotion of religious and cultural understanding, harmony and cooperation" in the General Assembly. That resolution has been adopted by consensus in successive sessions of the General Assembly at the fifty-eighth, fifty-ninth and sixtieth sessions.

This year marks the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, which the General Assembly adopted in 1981, by resolution 36/55. Article 3 of the Declaration states that

> "Discrimination between human beings on grounds of religion or belief constitutes an affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the principles of the Charter of the United Nations, and shall be condemned as a violation of the human rights and fundamental freedoms proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [of 1948]".

The Declaration encouraged the promotion of understanding, tolerance and respect for religion and belief and acknowledged that freedom of religion should contribute to the attainment of the goals of world peace, social justice and friendship among peoples, and to the elimination of ideologies or practices of colonialism, racism and racial discrimination. Building on the same principles, in 1999 the General Assembly adopted the historic Declaration on a Culture of Peace, which emphasized the promotion of multilateral cooperation, respect for life, the ending of violence and the freedom and practice of non-violence through dialogue, cooperation and commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes.

The significance of those international commitments to promote tolerance and peace are particularly relevant in today's globalized world, where there is increased interaction among all cultures and civilizations. Such close interaction has given rise to new forms of exchanges and understanding among peoples across regions, and has provided unprecedented opportunities for the transmission of ideas.

Ironically, those vast networks of connectivity and interdependence have not only brought peoples closer to each other but, at the same time, have produced divisions and friction among and within

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societies. The proliferation of the sources and channels of information has, while promoting better knowledge of other peoples, quite often reinforced stereotypes and deepened differences and alienation. Indeed, the gulf of misunderstanding among faiths and civilizations seems to have grown wider. Quite often, those divisions and frictions are manifested in religious tones and tenors. There is both a knowledge deficit and an understanding deficit.

As the world today is composed of States with diverse political, economic, social and cultural systems that have been determined by their history, traditions and cultural values, the stability of international peace and security can only be guaranteed by the universal recognition of the rights of all peoples and nations to freely determine their own approach towards progress and development. The role of the General Assembly is imperative in building an environment conducive to creating an equitable world order, as envisaged in the Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

Acknowledging that important role, the President of the sixtieth session expressed strong commitment to the need for dialogue and understanding among civilizations, cultures and religions to prevent provocative incidents and to develop better ways of tolerance and respect for religions and beliefs. We hope that the sixty-first session, under the able leadership of its President, will continue that work and make a positive contribution to promote and advance much needed dialogue on the important and sensitive issue of respect for religions.

In her report to the sixty-first session, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief highlighted the alarming trend of religious intolerance in many regions of the world. The Rapporteur noted with concern that "tolerance between religious communities was [adversely affected by] the actions carried out by ... governmental bodies and ... the negative role played by ... media in stigmatizing certain religious communities." (A/61/340, para. 26)

The General Assembly, as well as the Human Rights Council, should assume the leading responsibility in developing ways and means to help avert the worst consequences of the defamation of religions manifested in instances of Islamophobia.

There are some embryonic legal elements in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination that deal with incitement to religious hatred. While there is a need to sincerely invoke and apply all those existing mechanisms to promote understanding among religions and civilizations, there is also an urgent need to fill the juridical vacuum and redress the paucity of relevant laws that address issues relating to religious intolerance. In that regard, Pakistan would like to make the following proposals.

First, the General Assembly, as well as the Human Rights Council, through their appropriate resolutions and decisions, should condemn religious intolerance and address the defamation of religions, in particular the unwarranted linkage of Islam with violence and terrorism. The United Nations, in its endeavour to promote religious multiculturalism, should appeal to the larger membership to deter and discourage antagonism and discrimination against Islam and Muslim peoples.

Secondly, during its current session the General Assembly should hold a high-level event involving civil society organizations to focus on the issue of the incitement to racial and religious hatred and the promotion of tolerance.

Following the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, the General Assembly should encourage Member States to commence consultations to develop an international strategy to address the issue of religious intolerance and to prepare a legally binding instrument to combat the defamation of religion and prevent religious intolerance.

In order to promote harmony and cooperation among cultures and civilizations, President General Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan has advanced a strategy of enlightened moderation that highlights the principles of enhancing human welfare, freedom and progress everywhere, of forging harmony and understanding among all peoples and of seeking the peaceful resolution of conflicts and disputes. That strategy was endorsed by the Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference held in Putrajaya, Malaysia, in 2003.

In conclusion, I am pleased to announce that, in line with our past practice to promote a culture of peace at the United Nations, Pakistan, in collaboration with the Philippines, will once again introduce a draft resolution on promoting religious and cultural

understanding during the sixty-first session. Inter alia, the draft resolution will emphasize the need to strengthen freedom, justice, tolerance, cooperation and respect for the diversity of cultures and religions as important elements in building international peace and security.

It is our hope that the General Assembly will adopt that draft resolution by consensus. That would be a manifestation of our collective resolve to promote peace, prosperity and hope for all, and a categorical rejection of intolerance, hatred and discrimination. It is imperative that ethnicity, religion, culture, language and race not be allowed to become a source of divisiveness among our common humanity. We the representatives assembled here must be the catalysts of cooperation, and not the prophets of doom. We must affirm the indivisibility of the human race. We must reassert our common humanity and our common universal values. It is only thus that we can build a stable structure of peace and harmony among all the peoples of the United Nations.

**Mr. Aldai Ali** (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I have the pleasure and honour to extend to the Acting President my congratulations and respect on his election to assist in presiding over the General Assembly, a forum for collaborative efforts to address human concerns. I am also especially pleased to congratulate Sheikha Haya Rashed Al-Khalifa on her election as the first Arab woman to assume the presidency of the General Assembly.

My delegation has studied the report of the Secretary-General regarding the promotion of interreligious dialogue (A/60/201), as well as the report regarding the comprehensive mid-term review of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World (2001-2010), prepared by UNESCO and transmitted under a note by the Secretary-General (A/60/279). While we commend the progress achieved by Member States and agencies of the United Nations, as well as by non-governmental organizations, in the various areas covered by the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, we have also taken note of the hurdles that have impeded the achievement of progress in other areas.

Peace has been one of the major objectives of UNESCO since its establishment at the end of the Second World War. UNESCO has taken up the task of building the culture of peace in the minds of people since the end of the twentieth century. That is a very complicated task, given the state of the world today, in which there is both war and major economic and strategic changes.

In defining the culture of peace, UNESCO has proven itself to be an organization of values, promoting common attitudes and behaviours based on non-violence and respect for the fundamental rights of human beings and in fostering understanding, tolerance and unity. It has done so in a framework of cooperation that encourages contributions by all social groups and promotes the exchange of information.

The culture of peace is closely linked to the promotion of development, economic and social security, democracy, political stability, disarmament, military security, economic equality and dialogue and international cohesion. Developing a culture of peace is based on shared international values, including respect for human life, freedom, justice, unity, tolerance, human rights and gender equality. It is well understood that peace based on justice, respect for human rights and individual dignity is also a humanitarian objective in its own right. Peace is the road to construction and stability and an avenue to creativity and innovation in all areas.

The Sudan's current generation was raised on the basis of the principles to which I have referred. Those principles have led to peace in my country. Today's generation was not raised to respect war and aggression. In fact, following the example of their great forefathers, our people have rejected war, injustice and persecution and have chosen to protect their land, honour and property. He who dies without protecting his land, honour and property is a martyr. Peace has also become a strategic objective of my country: it is the cornerstone of development and progress.

As the Sudan looks ahead to a bright future of peace, following many years of civil war that led to the deaths of more than 2 million of my fellow citizens and the displacement of more than 4 million women, children and the elderly — in addition to the destruction of infrastructure and natural resources — at the beginning of 2005 my country attained its most important achievement in its modern history, namely, the Comprehensive Peace Agreement covering the southern part of our country. That Agreement put an end to bloodshed that lasted for 22 years. Following

that very important development, the Sudan has focused its efforts on making the Agreement a reality. Now, nearly two years since the conclusion of the Agreement, the list of our accomplishments includes the implementation of several of the Agreement's provisions at the federal and provincial levels.

This year, my country added to that achievement yet another accomplishment by signing the Abuja Peace Agreement on Darfur. That undertaking was sponsored by the African Union and generously hosted by our sisterly country, Nigeria. My Government is hard at work to convince the other parties to adhere to the Agreement, in order that peace and stability may prevail throughout the Sudan. In that regard, I wish to say that my Government's efforts will continue. We have achieved a comprehensive peace agreement of utmost importance in the eastern part of the country. That accord was gratefully sponsored by our brotherly country, Eritrea.

In the context of that peaceful environment, the Sudan has worked to make the culture of peace a reality — transforming it from theory to daily practice. In that connection, with the assistance of United Nations specialized agencies, the Sudan launched a programme to help refugees and displaced persons return to their land. We have also provided assistance to those who have returned voluntarily so they may resume normal lives. In addition, we have successfully carried out a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, to enable former combatants to return to civilian lives, civil society and jobs. Moreover, we are working to make it possible for returnee children to continue their education through intensive educational programmes that include the principles and values of a culture of peace and tolerance.

Following that same approach, my Government has put in place special committees to amend laws to bring them into conformity with the transitional constitution, promulgate a law on political parties and speed up the process of national reconciliation and rehabilitation. In addition to putting in place special priority programmes to fulfil the requirements of peace and security by implementing and strengthening the principles of the Peace Agreement, my Government has also continued to set up appropriate machinery for conflict prevention and resolution. We have stepped up educational and awareness campaigns to promote the culture of peace by conducting studies on the resettling of nomads and controlling the arbitrary expansion of agricultural projects, as well as by putting into effect local laws to resolve conflicts and disputes.

The Sudan is determined to continue to achieve a peaceful resolution for the issue of Darfur, a solution that is in the interests of the peoples of the region, and to implement fully the provisions of the agreements reached at Naivasha, Cairo, Abuja and eastern Sudan. Whenever possible, we will also work to speed up the establishment of the machinery agreed upon within the set timeframes, as agreed by the parties. We will also continue to address the issues of refugees and displaced persons.

My country is working to develop a federal regime on sound bases by expanding the authority and mandate of our provinces, at the expense of the central Government, as well as to bring development to those areas that are underdeveloped or that have been affected by war. We are also working to step up campaigns to raise awareness and guidance about the culture of peace, especially in tribal areas. We are trying to involve local, provincial and national authorities in the reconciliation process and to repatriate nomads, providing them with safe drinking water and enabling them to relocate in order to avoid tribal disputes.

In the field of information, the Sudan has worked to expand national and provincial radio and television programmes and broadcasts focusing on a culture of peace. A number of centres for the promotion of a culture of peace have been set up in universities and other places of higher learning, as well as in civil society organizations. The Sudan has also worked with the press and publications centre to raise awareness about a culture of peace and to encourage the expression of diverse local cultures and languages, under the theme of "Unity in diversity".

In that context, my Government has continued to devote particular attention to the issues of religion and of freedom of belief and worship, with emphasis on local religious beliefs. My Government has also established and supported a number of civil society organizations focusing on religion, a dialogue of cultures and peaceful coexistence.

My country is very concerned at current tensions and quarrels at the regional and international levels, given that certain Powers are fomenting and enjoying conflict among religions and cultures, defaming other

religions instead of respecting them and their followers. The caricatures that mocked our Prophet Muhammad and other such actions are reprehensible and will come back to haunt their perpetrators. This represents a setback in terms of our achievements in the context of the interreligious and intercultural dialogue. We must therefore ensure that a mechanism is put in place to put an end to any defamation of religions, cultures or societies, in order to maintain international peace, security and stability.

My country fulfilled its commitment to achieve the agreement that led to the Comprehensive Peace Agreement. It is continuing to deploy efforts in the western and eastern parts of the country to make the culture of peace and agreement thereon a reality. This will require that the international community fulfil the financial pledges it made at the Oslo donors conference. We hope that it will support the mechanisms necessary to ensure the full realization of the culture of peace and stability to which we all aspire.

We cannot speak of the maintenance of international peace and security in today's world without focusing on efforts to deal with emerging conflicts and their causes, in addition to promoting a multifaceted culture of peace by including Governments, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations in the process.

**Mr. Hamidon** (Malaysia): My delegation is encouraged by the efforts of various United Nations bodies, under the coordination of UNESCO, to promote a culture of peace.

The decade 2001-2010 was designated as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. As we approach the end of 2006, a little more than midway through this decade, we should pause and reflect on whether our efforts have contributed to the realization of a culture of peace.

If we take peace to mean more than just the absence of war, but also justice and equity for all as a basis for living together in harmony and free from violence, I would point out, offering my own country as a humble example, that Malaysia has achieved that goal. This can be seen in the relations that characterize its multi-ethnic, multireligious and multicultural society.

It is no accident that this has been achieved. Since our independence, almost five decades ago, the Malaysian Government, through concerted and consistent efforts, has sought to build a stable and prosperous nation by implementing policies that emphasize the creation of a just and equitable society, despite the different beliefs, religions and ethnicities of its people. In many ways, the socio-economic and political policies pursued by Malaysia in effect incorporate many of the areas for action outlined in the United Nations Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.

Among the eight action areas in the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, I would highlight the sixth, which concerns advancing understanding, tolerance and solidarity. It was in this context, in 2001, that the United Nations commemorated the International Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. On that note, I have to say that we are still far from where we were five years ago in achieving understanding, tolerance and solidarity among the peoples of the world, which are represented in the United Nations.

Let us recall that it was around this time a year ago that the world was shaken by images of the outpourings of discontent and anger that followed the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Muhammad, a sacred figure central to the Islamic faith and close to the hearts of its faithful. Have we really learned any lessons from the pain, hurt and loss experienced on both sides, or was it all in vain?

We are fully aware that the world we live in is changing. Where there were once national borders separating peoples, borderlessness prevails. Goods, services and labour are flowing more freely due to the process of trade liberalization and globalization, but this has been accompanied by the opening of a Pandora's box. Ideas, beliefs and cultures intermingle and mix and, at times, as we have seen recently, could lead to explosive situations.

I would say that my country is not too different from New York City. They are both rich and teeming with life due to the kaleidoscopic makeup of their people. But this experience is not without its challenges, which we must address.

In that regard, allow me to quote from the preamble to the Constitution of UNESCO:

> "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed".

Those words carry a deep meaning on which we should meditate, particularly here in the General Assembly, where the peoples of the world are represented and where we can have a meeting of the minds so as to seek to promote understanding, tolerance and solidarity, and, hopefully, achieve a culture of peace.

**Mr. Zhang Dan** (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): Civilization is a product of human progress and development. During its long history, humankind has created, nurtured and developed civilizations of all kinds. History has taught us that dialogue, exchanges and, indeed, convergence among various civilizations are a natural tendency and an intrinsic desire on the part of all civilizations aimed at their own refinement and sustained development.

We believe that consideration by the General Assembly of the agenda item on a culture of peace is conducive to reinforcing a dialogue among civilizations, promoting the settlement of disputes by peaceful means and establishing a family of nations characterized by harmonious coexistence. In recent years, the relevance of the concept of a culture of peace has grown increasingly important, especially when considering the idea that it is necessary to avoid equating terrorism with any specific civilization or religion in the fight against terrorism.

The Chinese nation has always been peace-loving. Our ancient thinkers have left us with a great concept of "concord with difference" — that is, concord without monotony and difference without conflict. Observing and addressing issues from that perspective will not only help countries maintain friendly relations with their neighbours, but also facilitate the resolution of disputes in the international community.

The Chinese delegation is pleased to note that, by adopting the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace and the Programme of Action of the Global Agenda for Dialogue among Civilizations, the international community is paying increasing attention to dialogue among different civilizations. The relevant United Nations and international organizations and their member States have used various means, including study visits, educational activities and scientific research, to help people of various countries acquire a better understanding of the cultures and religions of other people. All of that has greatly promoted the culture of peace.

The long process of history has left humanity with a rich cultural heritage. That heritage, unique to each nation, is the valuable property not only of individual nations and peoples, but also of all humankind. The Chinese Government has always attached great importance to the protection of cultural heritage. It has acceded to relevant international instruments such as the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. It has also set up a framework comprising its own system of laws in that regard, based on the law of the People's Republic of China on the protection of cultural relics.

The Government has designated the second Saturday of June of each year, as Cultural Heritage Day, with the aim of raising the awareness of the general public of the importance of the protection of cultural heritage, and to create a favourable atmosphere to encourage everyone to take part in such endeavours.

China will continue to participate actively in the activities of UNESCO in returning cultural property to their countries of origin, in seeking appropriate solutions in that regard and in contributing to international efforts towards the protection of cultural heritage.

**Mr. Chabar** (Morocco) *(spoke in French)*: At the outset, my delegation wishes to thank the UNESCO for the quality of its report (*see A/61/175*) and for the relevant information it contains. The holding of this debate is an opportunity for the international community to assess initiatives taken so far to promote a culture of peace and to develop forums for dialogue among civilizations and religions. It is also an opportunity to say to those who speak of the clash of civilizations that such a notion is a politically incorrect and philosophically dubious concept. That fact draws its essence and legitimacy from the early history of Morocco and its multifaceted roots as well as from our understanding of Islam. Thus we reach out to others while remaining ourselves and in order to enrich our society we engage in a dynamic exchange with others. Conflicts among societies often result from misunderstandings of one another and out of ignorance and lack of respect for the moral and societal values of others.

Based upon our profound convictions, the Kingdom of Morocco has firmly supported the

initiative for the Alliance of Civilizations initiated by Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Mr. André Azoulay, Counselor to His Majesty the King, participated in this exercise, and in that manner my country supports the implementation of a project for a new world order based on relations between the Western Christian world and the Arab Muslim world — a society whose dimensions are ideological, political, institutional and cultural.

Throughout the past year, the world of the twenty-first century has been characterized by unbridled globalization. It has seen inter-ethnic and cultural tensions generated by defamatory and provocative actions in the name of the freedom of expression. Morocco condemns and has condemned those actions, based on the principle that the freedom of some cannot be exercised to the detriment of the sacred values of others. It is in that spirit that my country welcomes the efforts undertaken by UNESCO in that area, and supports the initiative to make dialogue an essential ingredient for bringing religions and civilizations closer together and in preventing conflicts.

It goes without saying that the dissemination of knowledge will to a great extent extend from the promotion of economic development and from strengthening human and institutional capacities. We are convinced that international cooperation and cultural exchanges among nations are important mechanisms for bringing peoples closer together. The same is true for education in the area of human rights and the inclusion of marginalized communities.

The Kingdom of Morocco has continued in that vein and includes in its educational system and its school programmes the promotion of human rights. It has opened up its audiovisual media and actively participates in international efforts aimed at bridging the digital divide. In addition, it has supported and contributed to the initiative of His Excellency Mr. Abdoulaye Wade, President of Senegal, to create a fund to assist developing countries to catch up in the area of information and communication technology. My country also hosts a number of training courses in various areas for foreign professionals, in particular those from sub-Saharan Africa.

Protecting cultural heritage and capacity-building, as well as increasing the awareness of cultural values, are effective means for peoples and nations to preserve their identity and their traditions in a national and international environment imbued with peace, tolerance and mutual respect.

The international community must now do more in the area of education — to design curriculums, manuals and activities that will advocate cultural and religious tolerance, the peaceful settlements of conflicts and the promotion of human rights, bearing in mind the need to keep the citizen at the heart of those interests.

The international community is also invited to harmonize its efforts to make it possible for everyone to have access to information technology, which is now the prime means for disseminating and distributing knowledge. Faced with the challenge of ever-increasing ignorance of one another, the ever-narrowing sense of identity and the ideological void that we have, to our detriment, ignored for so long, we must be more open and foster a mingling of ideas of humanism and humanity, in the best tradition of our world.

We are called upon to carry out a tireless battle against ideological and moral degradation that occurred when the world was not watching and violence took over the landscape of politics and religion. My delegation is a sponsor of draft resolution A/61/L.11, as introduced by the Philippines and Pakistan. It meets the concerns of a number of delegations. My delegation therefore hopes that the draft will be adopted by consensus.

My delegation will also continue to place great importance on promoting a culture of peace and support any constructive and responsible initiative along those lines. It will also consider with interest draft resolution A/61/L.16, introduced this morning by the representative of Bangladesh, entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010".

**Mrs. Asmady** (Indonesia): My delegation has always attached great importance to the promotion of a culture of peace. That is one of the important approaches that we are pursuing in order to deal with the persistent occurrence of prejudice, intolerance, misperceptions and xenophobia, which generate hatred, violence and disharmony within and among societies, as well as among peoples and nations throughout the world.

It is now widely recognized that the active promotion of a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations, leading to universal respect for our diversity of beliefs, cultures and languages, is vital for the achievement of sustainable peace.

We thank the Director-General of UNESCO for his informative report on various activities carried out by the organization in this field, as contained in document A/61/175. Of particular importance to my delegation is UNESCO's programme to promote a culture of peace through education. We believe that that programme should be expanded in order to reach a wider target through the active involvement of various stakeholders, especially civil society.

It is worth recalling that both the Millennium Declaration and the 2005 United Nations World Summit affirmed shared values and principles such as freedom, equality, solidarity and tolerance as being essential to international relations in the twenty-first century. That is indeed a reaffirmation of the imperative of promoting a culture of peace to achieve sustainable peace at all levels in this increasingly globalized world.

*Mr. Chidyausiku (Zimbabwe), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

It should be born in mind that, despite the proliferation of intercultural, intercivilizational and interfaith initiatives in recent times, the world is still beset by violence, hatred, discrimination, ignorance and poverty. We really need to step up our endeavours to meet the challenges ahead of us.

Our debate today is, in itself, a strong indication that we must all be prepared to work together to develop better ways to promote tolerance and respect for diversity and freedom of thought, conscience, religion and belief. It is an opportunity to reflect more deeply on the promotion of dialogue on those important and sensitive issues, including the need for better implementation of all relevant provisions of the existing international instruments, as well as for exploration of further international measures to enhance the promotion of a culture of peace.

As a heterogeneous country itself, Indonesia is a firm believer in the merit of promoting dialogue among civilizations, cultures and religions. Indonesia has been taking specific steps in the fields of education, culture, media, religion and society to promote the shared values of peace, compassion and tolerance.

We should support the role of the media in bridging gaps, developing better understanding among various religions, cultures and peoples, facilitating a policy of dialogue among societies and assisting in the creation of an environment conducive to the sharing of human experience, thereby contributing to the advancement of the culture of peace. We believe that, while the media can be a force for good, they can also — as demonstrated by the cartoon controversy — do a great deal of harm.

In that connection, Indonesia, in collaboration with Norway, held the first Global Inter-Media Dialogue last September in Bali, which was attended by leading mass media practitioners from five continents. The objective of the Inter-Media Dialogue was to increase the sensitivity of the mass media to other cultures and faiths without compromising freedom of expression.

Also of tremendous importance was the active involvement by informal community leaders in the Second International Conference of Islamic Scholars, held last June in Jakarta, which was attended by 300 scholars from more than 54 countries. The Conference produced a programme of action entitled "To Promote Islam as a Religion of Moderation and Tolerance". Indonesia also recently hosted the World Peace Forum, held in Jakarta from 14 to 16 August 2006, aimed at building dialogue and mutual cooperation among civilizations and promoting better understanding of human values. Furthermore, Indonesia has been actively promoting interfaith and intercultural dialogue in the Asia-Pacific region and within the Asia-Europe Meeting. That is our way of advancing the culture of peace within and among cultures, religions and civilizations.

In today's global multicultural environment, we should encourage dialogue at all levels of society, using it as an effective tool for promoting harmony and tolerance in interpersonal as well as inter-State relationships. Acknowledgement of global multiculturalism should also be reflected through respect for the sovereign integrity of all nations and the continued commitment of developed countries to provide assistance to developing countries.

Religion and culture are the core components of civilization. That implies that the promotion of dialogue among nations and societies must be seen as critical on the global agenda and as a factor contributing to the cultivation of a culture of peace.

We still have a long way to go towards the achievement of a culture of peace throughout the world. We should continue to explore various ways and means to advance such a culture. In that regard, we support the idea of declaring one of the coming years as the Year of Dialogue among Religions and Cultures, during which Governments, the United Nations system and civil society will be invited to undertake appropriate activities marking that event. We also support the idea of establishing a department within the Secretariat to deal with issues relating to the promotion of a culture of peace.

**Mrs. Chabau Montalvo** (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): In 1945, through the Charter of the United Nations, we designed a new system of international relations to prevent a repetition of the terrible experiences of the two world wars, to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war and to create a democratic and equitable international order based on respect for the dignity of all human beings.

Those were the objectives for which our Organization was established to maintain international peace and security. We also decided that the United Nations would base its actions on the principles of the sovereign equality of all its Members, the peaceful settlement of international disputes, the non-use or threat of use of force and non-intervention in the internal affairs of States. We also agreed that all peoples would achieve economic and social progress.

However, chaos continues to prevail in the world, despite attempts to convince us that conditions and rules now exist that will guarantee peace, order, well-being and security, which our planet needs so much.

A few countries that monopolize economic, technical and political power continue to uphold an international order that makes them ever richer and the majority of the countries ever poorer, exploited and dependent.

Six decades after the creation of the United Nations, the current economic and social situation threatens the very existence of humankind. Thus, today more than 1.1 billion people — one sixth of the world's population — survive on less than $1 a day and more than 2.7 billion — almost half of the Earth's inhabitants — barely survive on less than $2; 500 million infants live in extreme poverty; 1 million children under the age of five die annually from preventable diseases; more than 100 million children cannot attend school; and 850 million people suffer hunger.

Moreover, the survival of millions of persons and entire nations is threatened by the atmosphere of international insecurity caused by the aggressive policies and plans of the only super-Power of this unipolar world. Likewise, it is alarming that powerful countries seek to foment conflicts, appealing to interventionist concepts that contravene the Charter and that only aggravate the root causes of armed conflict, from generalized poverty to the desire to control strategic natural resources.

Notwithstanding the existence of that adverse landscape affecting the developing countries — and although the winds of reform are blowing in the United Nations, there is no intention of radically reforming this decadent institution so as to make it a body that truly represents the interests of all peoples of the world and not just a select few — it is indispensable to foster an atmosphere of international peace.

It is essential to uphold a culture of peace and non-violence that promotes dialogue between civilizations and the right of all peoples to self-determination and solidarity as a fundamental value, pursuant to which the world's problems should be addressed so that the responsibility to solve them may be shared and focused on helping those who need it most.

It must be firmly maintained that sovereignty cannot be sacrificed to an exploitative and unjust order in which a hegemonic super-Power, supported by its power and strength, can claim to decide it all. The main causes of the current conflicts are the poverty and underdevelopment that prevail in the overwhelming majority of countries, and the unequal distribution of the world's wealth and knowledge.

The current underdevelopment and poverty are the consequences of the conquest, colonization, enslavement and plundering of the territories of vast parts of the world by the former metropolises, the emergence of imperialism, and the bloody wars to divvy up the world anew. Today, those perennial Powers have the moral obligation to indemnify our countries for the damage that they inflicted on us over centuries.

None of that which exists in the economic and political order serves the interests of humanity. That order, which marginalizes and excludes 80 per cent of the world's population, cannot be sustained. We believe that the main objective of the United Nations is to save the world not only from war, but also from

underdevelopment, hunger, disease, poverty and the destruction of natural resources that are essential to human existence. And we should do it soon, before it is too late.

Cuba reiterates its adherence to multilateralism and multilaterally agreed solutions, pursuant to the United Nations Charter and international law, as the only acceptable way to address international problems. Only thus will there be peace and development for all.

Our contribution to that undertaking is based on a comprehensive international cooperation programme, which is selflessly implemented in the areas of sport, health and education by thousands of Cuban specialists and technicians who provide support services in many countries. They do all that despite the tight economic, commercial and financial blockade imposed on Cuba by the United States, against which most Members of the United Nations will again declare themselves on Wednesday, 8 November.

The dream of achieving truly just and rational norms that govern human destinies seems impossible to many. We are convinced that the struggle for the impossible should therefore be a goal that the Organization sets for itself. We have to sow ideas, eradicate selfishness and foster solidarity and genuine international cooperation. Once we do so, there will be no need for all the weapons created by this civilization.

**The Acting President**: I now call on the Observer of the Holy See.

**Archbishop Migliore** (Holy See): The maintenance, defence and promotion of peace in the world are at the summit of the functions and priorities of the United Nations. Through conviction and many years' experience, the Organization believes that peace is first and foremost a culture, prior to being a network of peaceful relations among nations, anchored in the system of rules and mechanisms of international law.

Throughout the years of United Nations activity, the Holy See has expressed confidence in this institution as a privileged forum in which nations can work in concert for the promotion of peace, and has offered its own contribution in reading the signs of the times, deepening reflection, and above all rallying entire communities throughout the world to foster and maintain a culture of peace.

At the start of this year, Pope Benedict XVI addressed all women and men of goodwill with a message entitled "In Truth, Peace". Reading the signs of our times — in which terrorism, nihilism and fanatical fundamentalism threaten peaceful coexistence — the Pope underlined the inseparable bond between peace and truth.

Peace implies a truth that is common to all peoples beyond cultural, philosophical and religious diversities. It is the idea of the dignity of every human person intimately linked to the transcendent. Thus peace will be reached once it is understood and put into practice as the realization of this shared truth, in mutual respect for cultural diversities.

An extreme exaltation of differences clashes with this fundamental truth. We need to regain the awareness that we share a common destiny that is ultimately transcendent so as to maximize our historical and cultural differences, not in opposition to, but in cooperation with, people belonging to other cultures. To this end, we need to affirm our common commitment to promoting institutions and methods of joint action and cooperation between peoples and nations, and especially to fostering education for peace, at a level well above the necessary and hoped-for structural reforms.

In this context, my delegation would like to renew its support for the ongoing International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World, 2001-2010. We all have a great responsibility for the formation of future generations. That is why the Pontifical Council for Inter-religious Dialogue will convene a meeting in Assisi tomorrow for young people from different countries and cultural and religious backgrounds, engaging them in a personal commitment to dialogue, prayer and education on tolerance and peace.

The lack of the basic truth of peace at the cultural level has undoubtedly produced devastating effects down through the years, and there are still cultures and mentalities that even today deny it exists. The most dramatic example of this is international terrorism. The criminal designs of international terrorism rest on false cultural roots that deny the existence of a link between truth and human life. Such roots are identifiable in nihilism and in fanatical fundamentalism, which are erroneous ways of relating to truth. The nihilist denies the very existence of truth, while the fundamentalist claims to be able to impose it by force. Despite their different origins and cultural backgrounds, both show a

dangerous contempt for human beings and human life, and ultimately for God himself.

The causes of lack of peace in our world cannot be reduced to those of an exclusively social or political nature. Terrorism, war, genocide and national and international injustice that discriminate, oppress and abandon entire populations to hunger and helplessness, or hinder or threaten the right to existence of nations, can also be explained by deeper motivations of a cultural, ideological, philosophical and even religious nature. Social behaviour and political choices usually follow. At this level, it is essential to formulate both national and international peace policies that will embrace the truth of peace and shun lies as a system for relations or governance.

With the 2005 Summit Outcome Document, this Organization adopted the principle of the responsibility to protect as a practical translation of the exercise of sovereignty and of governance. The responsibility to protect presupposes the capacity and the will to remove threats, to establish relations and mechanisms apt to continue to dissuade humanity from resolving their disputes through the use of force and, to the extent possible, to substitute law for force.

The responsibility to protect is intimately linked with and directly proportional to respect for the truth of peace, whether it is a question of deciding to use force in extreme cases, the conduct during and after conflict, military expenditure, the arms trade, disarmament and nuclear proliferation, demographics or the approach to development. To realize peace at the social and political levels, the correct relation between truth and peace at the cultural level needs to be re-established.

**The Acting President**: In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/2 of 19 October 1994, I call upon the Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

**Mr. Schulz** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies): The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) is taking the floor under this item because of the importance it attaches to a much stronger effort by Governments, international organizations and civil society on this subject.

We are now past the mid-point of the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. The atmosphere that greeted the adoption of General Assembly resolution 52/15 in 1997 is by now probably a distant memory for many organizations and Governments, but the need for concerted action has probably never been greater.

This is a message we receive unequivocally from our worldwide membership of national Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. It is a message they give to us as we prepare for the Thirtieth International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, which will be held in Geneva in late November 2007.

The IFRC's member Societies are looking to us, as their representative in the international community, to bring information about what the major actors are doing, not just what they are saying, to promote tolerance and respect for diversity. These are essential actions if the world is truly to combat discrimination and prejudice. They are essential actions in a world that is witnessing a surge in community prejudice.

There are many examples of our work and that of national Societies. To give a few examples, the British Red Cross has worked with the Bangladesh Red Crescent to bridge gaps and bring support to people living in vulnerability in the United Kingdom. Early outreach work has developed into other actions for first aid and community health assistance. A programme of volunteer recruitment has provided much-needed resources capable of making a difference for the community. Similar work, concentrating on volunteer recruitment, has also been reported by other Red Cross Societies, including those of Denmark, Germany and Sweden. In Iceland, the Government and the Icelandic Red Cross have joined forces in training Icelandic volunteer peacebuilders in preparation for their peace missions.

I mention these actions not just for the record, but to emphasize our belief that action must take place with the full involvement of the communities themselves. This is essential in all countries, but it is of special importance in countries where migration has brought together people of different cultures, ethnicities, traditions and beliefs. The issue of migration and integration has been a key subject in the work of some of our partner international organizations, and we pay tribute to the International Organization for Migration and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the work they have done to broaden understanding of the problems and the need for solutions.

We know that the IFRC has a role to play as a network bringing together all the world's cultures under one set of fundamental principles. In this context, we underline the important role of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and we see a range of opportunities in this field in the future, linking our national Societies to national human rights institutions.

We are working now with our bridging role — bridging Governments, intergovernmental organizations, civil society and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at high levels, and bridging communities and local authorities where grassroots contact is the key. We use our membership of the "big six" — the six main international youth organizations — to emphasize the role of youth in finding and implementing solutions, and we emphasize worldwide the need for youth to work with the fundamental principles of the movement to promote tolerance and respect for diversity as they prepare to lead the countries of the world in the future.

Our support for the Secretary-General's initiative, the Alliance of Civilizations, was demonstrated through the participation of our Deputy Secretary-General in the hearings organized by the High-level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations in July 2006 in Geneva. At the hearings, he recalled the pledge delivered by the IFRC in 2003 at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent. The pledge contains the vow of the IFRC, which is important to this debate, in two respects: to develop public dialogue and advocacy, promoting tolerance, non-discrimination and respect for diversity at the national and international level; and to develop partnerships, promote dialogue and support programmes in this area with Governments and international and national organizations working towards the same goals, particularly in view of the importance of the role played by young people in peer and non-formal education to promote international friendship and understanding.

We also spoke of the need to intensify community participation in such programme, highlighting, in particular, the importance of an enabling volunteer environment through which such programmes can flourish at the community level and through which a real impact can be made on the stigmatization and exclusion which so many marginalized people face in our times.

Against this background, I give the Assembly our commitment to maintain a high profile on these issues. We will consult thoroughly and widely as we prepare for the 2007 International Conference in Geneva, which will bring together the world's Governments and our national society leaders. We look forward to a strong and positive outcome from this debate, with commitments from all to make this world a better place to live.

**The Acting President**: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this agenda item.

I would like to inform members that action on draft resolution A/61/L.11 will be taken at a later date. The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 44

**Agenda item 49**

**Sport for peace and development**

**Report of the Secretary-General (A/61/373)**

**Draft resolution (A/61/L.12)**

**The Acting President**: I give the floor to the representative of Tunisia to introduce the draft resolution A/61/L.12.

**Mr. Hachani** (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): Allow me at the outset to congratulate the Secretary-General on his report entitled "Sport for Development and Peace: the way forward" (A/61/373) and to tell him how much my delegation appreciates the work done by Mr. Adolf Ogi, former President of Switzerland, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, as well as for his tireless efforts to ensure the success of programmes aimed at promoting sport worldwide. I also wish to thank his representative, Mr. Djibril Diallo, Director of the New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace, for his commitment to the cause of sport and for his valuable contribution in this area.

I wish to reiterate the determination of Tunisia to pursue its efforts to make sport, which is so necessary for healthy body and mind, the link and common denominator among Member States whose commitment to peace, the essential objective of our Organization, is widely shared. I also wish to express our satisfaction at the interest and enthusiasm generated during the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005, which was celebrated by the holding of events

worldwide, thus underscoring the importance of sport for the participants and their commitment to the universal character of this activity.

In the framework of the Year, Tunisia organized the International Conference on Sport and Health, which culminated in the Hammamet Declaration in which participant States reiterated the importance of sport and physical education for a lifestyle that is physically and mentally healthy. Given the noble character of sport and its vital contribution in the rise of future generations who seek out good physical and mental fitness, Tunisia welcomes the unanimous adoption at the thirty-third session of the UNESCO General Conference of the International Convention against Doping in Sport, the first global instrument to combat this dangerous scourge. Tunisia takes this opportunity to invite Member States to take all necessary measures to address this danger which undermines both the health of athletes and the image and credibility of sporting events which honour mankind, such as the Olympic Games.

In order to keep enthusiasm high and to make sport a means of promoting universal principles for future generations, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/61/L.12, entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace", on behalf of the sponsors whose names appear in that document.

Since the publication of that document, the following Member States have become sponsors: Afghanistan, Albania, Antigua and Barbuda, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belarus, Belize, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cape Verde, the Central African Republic, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Israel, Japan, Kazakhstan, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Malta, Moldova, Mongolia, Montenegro, Oman, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, the Sudan, Suriname, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Ukraine, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam and Zambia.

This draft resolution is the fruit of broad consultations, both with a great number of Member States as well as with United Nations institutions. I wish to thank them sincerely for their interest in this text and for the active role they played in the success of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education. The draft resolution encourages all participants in the field of sport to set up awareness programmes for peace worldwide by organizing sporting events and by mainstreaming sport in their development programmes, drawing on the Action Plan contained in the report of the Secretary-General.

The draft resolution also invites Member States to set up sport programmes to further promote the international community's interest in important subjects such as gender equality and the empowerment of women. It also takes note with appreciation of the organization by the United Nations on 29-31 October 2006 of the first Global Youth Leadership Summit, which highlighted the importance of sport in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Solidarity among peoples at the beginning of the twenty-first century is not only a choice but a necessity which we are convinced can be solidified through sport. For this reason, the delegation of my country as well as the delegations of other sponsoring countries hope that this draft resolution will be supported by all Member States; this will send a strong message to all those men and women who promote the noble practice of sport and will constitute a major encouragement for athletes.

**Ms. Alzaabi** (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): On behalf of the delegation of the United Arab Emirates, it gives me great pleasure to begin my statement by thanking the Secretary-General for his recent report and for the valuable information contained therein, with which we expect to enrich our deliberations on this item.

The observance of the Olympic Truce, which was started by the General Assembly in the last decade, and the unanimity of heads of State and Government at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly on the importance of developing sport for peace and development, reflect the determination of the international community to harness that type of human activity to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Events have demonstrated that the interest of Governments and civil societies in developing sport and physical education can significantly contribute to

strengthening their national development programmes, particularly in the areas of improving public health among citizens, bringing local communities together, promoting respect for law among individuals, maintaining the safety of public facilities and environment, and enhancing coherence and diversity among individuals and communities. At the global level, international athletic events have contributed to strengthening international respect for the traditions and cultures of peoples and brought them closer together by enhancing the spirit of cooperation, tolerance, harmony and love among them.

The United Arab Emirates welcomes the efforts of the United Nations to ensure the success of the International Year for Sport and Physical Education 2005 and its other initiatives for cooperation and partnership with the International Olympic Committee and other organizations, including the establishment of institutional arrangements and funds and the organization of conferences and national seminars, as referred to in the recent report of the Secretary-General. All such activities seek to improve the quality of sporting events, to create an environment conducive to the achievement of various development plans, and to improve the quality of educational, cultural and health-related services for all.

The United Arab Emirates stresses the importance of expanding such initiatives to include in particular the extension of financial, economic and moral assistance to developing countries, especially the smallest and poorest, that are affected by wars and conflicts in order to enable them to meet their local needs, eliminate hotspots of poverty, violence and dissension in their societies, rebuild the infrastructure of their sport institutions, and promote sport among their youth, who will thus be able to share their athletic experiences and actively participate in regional and Olympic games.

In that context, we also stress the importance of reaching an international consensus on a code of good practice for sport and for developing strategic partnership programmes for all stakeholders and sport-related organizations, including sport associations and the private sector. That will contribute to disseminating ethics of human conduct and the principles of the United Nations Charter and to supporting joint efforts to enhance the social integration of vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities and the elderly. Moreover, partnership programmes will also help to support natural disaster response programmes and to combat violence, terrorism, crime, deviance, the illicit trade in drugs and many other vices.

Convinced that young people are its true national wealth, the Government of the United Arab Emirates has given special attention to the sport sector and its young men and women by incorporating physical education into the primary educational system. It has also supported the student scout movement with a view to developing the mental, physical and moral skills of students and instilling in them the values and principles necessary for improving their integration into local communities and their participation in environmental protection and awareness programmes, especially those related to humanitarian, social and health-related activities and local and national development.

Given its determination to sharpen and develop the skills and capacities of its young people throughout their years of primary education in order to enable them to effectively participate in national development plans at all levels, the Government of the United Arab Emirates has sought to institutionalize the sport sector. It has allocated substantial budgetary resources to financing sport development activities and youth programmes and incorporated them into its national social, environmental and health development programmes. It has also established various associations for sponsoring sport activities, including the General Authority for Youth and Sport, the Sport Federations Council and the National Olympic Committee, which all participate in developing and implementing a strategy to promote and sponsor national sport activities and to develop training, refereeing and fair competition among athletes.

The strategy also aims at supporting national clubs and unions and their teams. It has increased the number of sport clubs established in accordance with the latest international standards and regulations. These have contributed significantly in the past two decades to promoting sport among young people of both sexes, especially those with special needs, and enhanced their active participation in many of the national, regional and international competitive sports, including the Olympic Games. This has resulted in some of our national clubs and athletes winning distinguished medals and championships. In the interest of safeguarding the health of its athletes, the United Arab Emirates has also signed the Copenhagen Declaration on Anti-Doping in Sport.

The United Arab Emirates, which believes that the Olympic Truce can be an effective tool for ending wars and conflicts, urges the United Nations and relevant regional organizations to step up their joint efforts to revive that tradition and to utilize sport activities and competitions organized during conflicts to stabilize ceasefires, and to encourage belligerents to consider other ways of addressing their conflicts and to use dialogue and peaceful means for resolving their conflicts instead of resorting to war and destruction.

In that context, we also affirm the importance of enhancing other international initiatives aimed at promoting the concept of sport for all and at incorporating its noble values into educational and development strategies and programmes in order to enhance interaction and dialogue among different cultures and civilizations, promote mutual interests among peoples, and advance peacebuilding efforts. We also look forward to reaching international consensus on an anti-doping convention to prevent the abuse of drugs in all sport activities and to develop sport for young people in a healthy and sound environment that promotes their involvement in achieving the goals of security, peace and development in their communities.

**Mr. Maurer** (Switzerland): My delegation has taken note with great satisfaction of the Secretary-General's report entitled "Sport for development and peace: the way forward", which he has submitted to the General Assembly at its sixty-first session. We are also pleased that we are debating the report together with draft resolution A/61/L.12, entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace".

We are particularly pleased today with the outstanding publication on the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005, which has just been released, and which I can show to members in its beautiful United Nations blue cover. I am fully aware how sensitive an issue it is these days to promote a book from this rostrum. This book may not have the philosophical depth of a work by Noam Chomsky, but it is an impressive testimony to the great number and variety of initiatives, activities and networks aimed at making a difference through sport and play. It illustrates the efforts of the United Nations system, Governments, sport organizations and development agencies, as well as the private sector, to harness the great positive potential of sport and physical education to specifically and systematically promote development, education, peace and health.

None of that would not have been possible without the outstanding commitment of the Secretary-General himself and of his Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace and his teams in Geneva and New York. Switzerland congratulates them and thanks them for their untiring efforts.

Recalling our main contribution to the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005, we should like to highlight once again the importance of the second Magglingen Conference on Sport and Development, convened in December 2005 at the initiative of the Special Adviser. The Conference marked the culmination and conclusion of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005. It brought together more than 400 participants from 70 countries and all sectors of society.

The Conference represented a milestone on the path towards a worldwide partnership of sport and development. Its outcome document, the Magglingen Call to Action, was adopted unanimously by all participants. It is an action-oriented document targeted to everyone: sports organizations, athletes, Governments, development agencies, the private sector, the media, research institutions and armed forces. It calls upon all of them to use and promote sport for development and peace in their respective fields. For example, it calls upon multilateral organizations and the United Nations system to take a lead role in policy dialogue at the strategic and global levels, to raise the awareness of international actors and other partners, to strengthen networks and enhance coordination, and to promote the implementation and evaluation of projects and programmes.

Both the publication of the Special Adviser and the Magglingen Conference and its outcome show clearly that a solid foundation has been laid over the past few years, in particular 2005.

Today, it is up to all stakeholders not only to agree to a common vision, common aims and common areas for action for the future, but also, and even more important, to maintain the momentum for the further implementation of sport as an instrument to contribute to the attainment of development objectives, in particular the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In that regard, the main challenges ahead are taken up in the draft resolution before us today, which we fully support.

The time is ripe to continue investing in implementation. That means that agencies, funds and

programmes are called upon to systematically integrate and mainstream sport as an instrument in their own operational work — to translate the conceptual basis into action. While we understand the concern to increase the focus and prioritize the work of funds and programmes, we are deeply convinced that sport is not a distraction from that focus, but a formidable vehicle for achieving the MDGs.

The momentum so far, as well as the needs and challenges ahead, strengthen our conviction that it is time to significantly step up our efforts and activities. Further efforts are needed to enable the enormous potential of sport for development and peace to become a lasting reality.

We appeal to the United Nations family to join forces in order to establish a coherent and effective mechanism in that regard. The Special Adviser's role of providing guidance on the institutional future of sport for development and peace within the United Nations system is instrumental.

Today's debate is about sport for development and peace. Switzerland, however, is convinced that it is about much more. In our view, it is about the profile of the United Nations. Our engagement within the Organization is focused on intensifying its outreach, whether to civil society, to the private sector, to the scientific community or to the world of sport. The future of the United Nations lies in its partnerships with civil society at large. In that regard, sport is an ideal vehicle for bringing outreach and partnerships to life.

The draft resolution on the agenda of today's debate embodies that spirit. Switzerland fully supports its adoption.

**Mr. Al-Henzab** (Qatar) (*spoke in Arabic*): It gives me great pleasure to address the members of the General Assembly on this important item. I should also like to commend the United Nations Office of Sport for Development and Peace for promoting the concept of sport for development and peace throughout the world.

Increasingly, the topic of sport for development and peace is being accorded recognition and importance at the global level. The observance of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005 reflected international recognition of the organic relationship between sport and peace and development, a relationship that was highlighted in the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (resolution 60/1).

The State of Qatar subscribes to the notion that human beings are at the core of development. We attach great importance to the promotion of social justice and the safeguarding of values and practices that ensure social cohesion. We seek to create a favourable environment for women, girls, young people and other social groups not only by providing primary education and basic health care to all citizens, but also by basing our development agenda on the development of human resources and respect for human rights.

From the outset, the State of Qatar has supported United Nations activities to promote sport for development and peace. At the national level, we have taken concrete steps to develop and implement sustainable sport and physical education programmes and policies. The advocacy, care and vision of His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, and Her Highness Sheikha Mozah Nasser Abdullah Al Misnad, Consort of the Emir, have resulted in a host of successful initiatives to enhance understanding among countries and societies.

Indeed, the leaders of the State of Qatar regard sport as a direct, rewarding and important investment in Qatari children and young people that enables them to increase their productivity and enhance their sense of single community and common vision. The State of Qatar has launched a variety of initiatives such as the promotion of women's sport and the enhancement of physical education departments within our national educational system.

At the global level, the State of Qatar, although small in size, has made great strides in playing a pivotal role in the promotion of international peace and cooperation. An important example is our hosting of the fifteenth Asian Games at Doha, Qatar, in December 2006, which will help to bridge cultural divides, unite communities and help build leadership capacities and values within the sport world in the Asia-Pacific region.

The State of Qatar views sport and physical education as a catalyst for development and recognizes their multifaceted benefits, in particular for socio-economic development, for inculcating human values in the hearts and minds of citizens, and for promoting peace, international understanding and tolerance.

The role of sport in peace and development is a priority for all nations. Sport is a vehicle that

transcends differences and that teaches skills and values for a lifetime. It helps develop a sense of community and common purpose. Sport promotes integration, teamwork and tolerance. It strengthens bonds of friendship among young people. The peace we seek throughout every region of the world is not simply the absence of armed conflict or hostility; it is a web of unity among nations woven from the strands of interdependence, cooperation and creative thought. Sport is, in large measure, a vehicle for peacebuilding, fostering social cohesion and the unity of mankind.

The international community needs to harness the power of sport for peace and development. Greater attention should be given to the following issues. First, sport and physical education should evolve from a marginal sector to a priority development sector and should be viewed as a catalyst for socio-economic development. Secondly, sport must be viewed as a human right that overcomes barriers of race, religion, gender, disability and social background. Thirdly, sport should be better integrated into government development polices and United Nations development programmes. Fourthly, more thought must be given to using sport as a means to promote intercultural dialogue, in particular during post-conflict and peacebuilding phases. Fifthly, there is a need for partnership between national Olympic committees and the United Nations system to improve the allocation of resources and to optimize their use. Were we to implement those and other measures, we would succeed in making sport an essential component of development.

I would like finally to thank the friendly delegation of Tunisia for introducing draft resolution A/61/L.12, which the State of Qatar fully supports.

**Mr. Sayeed** (India): We thank the Secretary-General for his report entitled "Sport for Development and Peace: the way forward" (A/61/373). We note that the report reviews the achievements of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005, including the broad range of activities and initiatives carried out worldwide by Member States, the United Nations system and other stakeholders for continuing the momentum generated by the International Year.

Activities relating to sports and physical education are necessary components of human resource development. They have a positive impact on the overall personality of youth through the promotion of good health, comradeship and a spirit of friendly competition. Apart from providing beneficial recreation, sports also improve productivity and foster social harmony and discipline.

India believes in the key role of sports in national life. Given the importance of sports and games, the Government of India has taken several initiatives to improve the standard of sports in the country. In the modern world, the complexion of sports has undergone a transformation due to the use of modern equipment and the introduction of modern infrastructure and highly sophisticated equipment. The high degree of competitiveness in international sports has led to the nurturing of talent from a tender age and to greater emphasis on hard physical training along scientific lines.

Despite resource constraints, India has been making efforts for broad-basing sports and for the provision of modern sports infrastructure. The Government has focused its attention on the need for upgrading the skills of the coaching fraternity and for the provision of adequate sports-science backup. The Government has encouraged the national sports federations to function more efficiently and is also encouraging the active involvement of business and industry in the promotion of sports. The Government of India formulated a new national sports policy in 2001, keeping those objectives in view.

India has a long tradition of sports and physical fitness. In keeping with that tradition, the Government of India has instituted several sports awards to encourage achievements by sportspersons. The Government is also encouraging international cooperation in the field of sports and physical education and has been providing financial assistance to recognized national sports federations.

The Sports Authority of India was established by the Government in 1984 to achieve the twin objectives of the broad-basing of sport and nurturing talent in children of various age groups by providing them with the necessary infrastructure, equipment, coaching and other facilities. The Sports Authority is implementing a number of sports promotion schemes. Under one of its schemes, it established a sports medicine centre, which is operational full-time. The Sports Authority also maintains a dope control centre.

The Government of India has been promoting sports through several schemes that provide incentives

to encourage sports activities. The Sports Fund for Pensions for Meritorious Sportspersons was launched in 1994 and is providing pensions to about 375 sportspersons. A scheme for the promotion of sports and games in schools was introduced in 1986 to raise the standard of sports at the school level and to encourage participation in inter-school competitions.

To broad-base games and sports in rural areas, the Government launched the Rural Sports Programme in 1970-71. Under that scheme, tournaments are also organized for indigenous sports that are popular in different parts of the country. The Sports Scholarship Scheme was launched in 1970-71 to assist talented boys and girls in receiving a nutritious diet, sports equipment and other support and to pursue sports as a career option. The National Welfare Fund for Sportspersons was set up in 1982 to assist outstanding retired sportspersons. Under this scheme, pension and grants are provided to eminent sportspersons as well as their families. A National Sports Development Fund has been instituted to mobilize resources for Government and non-governmental sources, including the private and corporate sectors.

We have taken note of the various activities organized by the United Nations system to help build on the momentum of the International Year. We encourage the United Nations system to undertake activities for sport for development and peace and to develop indicators and benchmarks for evaluating and monitoring those activities. We agree with the Secretary-General that it is national Governments that are responsible for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

We have taken note of the Secretary-General's suggestions to Member States for maximizing the positive impact of sports and realizing the full potential of that powerful tool. India recognizes the positive value of sport as an instrument that can bring people together in a neutral and apolitical setting. In our neighbourhood, the game of cricket has sometimes served as an instrument of diplomacy, adding a new phrase to our lexicon, namely, cricket diplomacy.

India believes that sports activity is integral to the all-around development of the human personality. We have, therefore, remained engaged with the efforts of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, including his efforts to organize the United Nations Global Youth Leadership Summit. We are convinced that the engagement of youth will help energize the efforts of countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We support efforts by the United Nations system to generate awareness among the youth through such initiatives.

**Mr. Salih** (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I would like to express our appreciation to the President and to the Bureau, for their approach to guiding the work of the General Assembly. My delegation thanks the Secretary-General and the Sport for Development and Peace International Working Group for their valuable efforts.

My delegation sponsored last year's General Assembly resolution 60/9, on the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005. This year, my delegation will also join in sponsoring draft resolution A/61/L.12, on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace. My delegation also welcomes the Global Youth Leadership Summit organized by the United Nations in October 2006.

Because my Government understands the vital importance of sport and youth and the increasing role of this sector in capacity-building, development and promoting a culture of peace, we have established a new ministry for sport, youth and culture within the Government of National Unity, which establishes and supervises strategies and policies concerning those issues, and links them to legislation. That legislation is integrated with sport and youth institutions whose members are democratically elected through national and local sports unions and clubs and our national Olympic committee.

In its efforts to strengthen the important sport sector, my country has expanded its range of possibilities both horizontally and vertically by establishing physical education and sport programmes in institutes and universities, in order to graduate students qualified in many aspects of sport, who will then work in secondary schools, clubs and youth centres in villages, communities and towns. There is no doubt that that will be a positive development for sports projects; it will train qualified sport professionals.

In February 1957, at Khartoum, my country was honoured to contribute to the establishment of the Confederation of African Football (CAF), along with Egypt and Ethiopia. CAF is one of several African

entities that was established even before the Organization of African Unity in 1963. In February 2007, we will commemorate the golden anniversary of the establishment of CAF. The celebration will be held in the capital of my country, underscoring my country's support for the sport and cultural aspects of CAF. History will recognize the Confederation as having led the first regional and international effort to isolate and punish the apartheid regime of South Africa: South Africa was prohibited from attending on participating in the first African Cup of Nations, held in Khartoum in 1957.

My country has hosted regional sports competitions for countries of East and Central Africa on many occasions, because we believe in the importance of interaction among young people of the continent for increased communication and peace for all. Through our Olympic committee and our national sports associations, sport has played an important role in raising our awareness and in promoting development projects in the areas of education, health, awareness of the danger of pandemics such as HIV/AIDS, polio vaccination campaigns, the fight against malaria, awareness of the dangers of drugs and the use of steroids and stimulants, and environmental protection programmes.

Some of my country's most famous athletes participate in charitable causes. They include the runner Omar Khalifa, who is known worldwide for activities such as travelling from continent to continent for Sport Aid to help the victims of famine, desertification and drought in Africa; the swimmers Sultan Kayyah and Sariya Gadalla; and the football stars Haytham Mustafa and Faisal al-Ajam of the Al-Hilal and Al-Mirrikh clubs have participated in charity and social programmes, particularly for the children of my country and for the population and the children of Palestine, through playing for the Arab team which played a number of games two years ago, and serving as goodwill ambassadors for SOS Children's Villages. All of that has had a good impact. The national Sudanese teams and clubs have had the honour of strengthening relations with other Arab and African countries through formal and friendly competitions.

The signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and the Darfur Peace Agreement has doubled the responsibility of sport in its role in promoting development, peace and unity in the Sudan through strengthening those concepts and linking them with the reality of life among young people, children and women. Sports clubs in the Sudan, in particular the Al-Hilal and the Al-Mirrikh clubs, form a melting pot of unity among the provinces of the Sudan. We are a country of diverse religions, creeds, cultures and ethnicities, and sport is a pot in which all of the components of Sudanese society are mixed and unified. Sport makes an important contribution to providing support and assistance for areas of conflict in the south, in Darfur and in the camps for refugees and displaced persons. Sport has also helped to bolster education and health projects.

Given the importance of sport for peace and development, my country hopes for unified support from the international community. The Sudan looks forward to the cooperation of Member States, the United Nations and sport-related organizations, in working in coordination with my country to mobilize efforts in the area of sports and youth through the provision of financial, technical and logistical resources for capacity-building and for preparing qualified people as administrators in our Olympic committee and in national clubs and teams. We need assistance in training coaches and referees and in sponsoring talented athletes in all sports, as well as equipment and infrastructure such as playing fields and centres for youth and students in schools and universities. We must improve efficiency and increase the job placement of physical education graduates in order to build a solid base for young people and for generations to come.

In particular, we would like to note the importance of providing the necessary support for capacity-building programmes for sports specialists and journalists, as they are an important sector in the sports social and cultural system. This could be done through their elected association for sportswriters. Some prominent initiatives of many sports journals in the Sudan are undertaken in the area of supporting poor families, dealing with incurable diseases and sponsoring orphans. In addition, they play an important, responsible and pioneering role in disseminating good values, good conduct and serving higher interests, spreading the culture of peace and combating bad habits. All of this will have a positive impact in promoting the role of sports as a means of enhancing and spreading the values of peace and development and highlighting the values of right, goodness and tolerance in a country emerging from

conflict and war into an oasis of understanding, love and advancement through sports.

The delegation of Sudan would like to submit a proposal to the General Assembly through which the United Nations could sponsor a sports initiative in cooperation with FIFA, the International Olympic Committee and the African Union for Soccer in order to rebuild and rehabilitate the infrastructures of countries emerging from conflict and war, in Africa in general and in my country in particular.

**Mr. Chabar** (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): My delegation wishes to thank Secretary-General Kofi Annan for his report entitled "Sports for Development and Peace: the way forward" (A/61/373). We welcome the relevant information contained in that report, in particular the Action Plan, which provides a road map for the next three years to strengthen partnerships through sports as a means of promoting programmes for development and peace.

It is important to highlight the fact that sports and physical education are important means for promoting tolerance and a culture of peace and for bringing peoples closer together. The Kingdom of Morocco therefore supports the activities of the United Nations Offices of Sport for Development and Peace in Geneva and in New York and invites Member States to make necessary resources available to those offices so that they can carry out their mandates appropriately.

For several years now, the Kingdom of Morocco has included sport in its educational and school systems and has used this discipline as a means of combating poverty and exclusion. It played an active part in the holding of the International Year for Sport and Physical Education 2005 and set up a national coordination centre for this purpose. The active involvement of the Kingdom of Morocco in this area stems from its profound conviction that sport has become a powerful partner for development, because of the important role it can play in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and because it is a factor for bringing about an era of lasting peace. Morocco has decreed sport for all as one of its national priorities.

My delegation therefore believes that we must keep up the pace set by the International Year and the Action Plan and encourage the United Nations and other partners to move on from awareness activities to the implementation of a number of activities on a broader scale. This can be achieved by strengthening cooperation and coordination among Member States to promote a common understanding of the role of sport in the service of development and peace.

We must also set up an information network and define priorities to promote sports as a model and draft sports policies to ensure everyone's participation. It is important to increase sporting activities and to integrate them in physical education, as well as in public health policies and other relevant policies. My delegation supports the activities of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace and hopes that his mandate will be maintained.

The Kingdom of Morocco is a sponsor of draft resolution A/61/L.12 and hopes to see it adopted by consensus.

**Mr. Liu** Zhenmin (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): The Chinese delegation wishes to thank the Secretary-General for the report (A/61/373) submitted under this agenda item. The report reviews the achievements of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005, puts forward the United Nations Action Plan on sport for development and peace and pointed the way forward for the future efforts of the United Nations and its Member States in the field of sports.

The Chinese delegation appreciates the Secretary-General's proposal in the report to integrate sport into the development agenda and the programmes for health, education, development and peace, and to use it as a tool for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We agree that "sport for all" should constitute a basis for systematic efforts to use sports to promote development and peace. We believe that more attention and resources should be devoted to the cause of sport for development and peace.

China has a huge population and pays great attention to sports. A mutually reinforcing relationship has developed between sport and development in China. The past five years witnessed enormous achievements in China's economic and social development, and also the rapid development of sports. The year 2006 marks the eleventh anniversary of the launch of the Outline of the National Plan on Sport and Fitness for All. Today, awareness of the benefits of sports is rising among the Chinese people, resulting in increasing participation in sports and fitness activities. Sport for all at the grass-roots level has turned a brand new page in its development.

As the host of the 2008 Olympic Games, China's preparations for the Games are now in full swing. For the next five years, China's overall objective in the field of sports will be to use the opportunity of hosting and participating in the 2008 Olympics as a spur to the nation-wide efforts to implement sport for all, achieve preliminary results in creating a national system of sport and fitness with Chinese characteristics and realize the integrated, coordinated and sustainable development of sports.

In 2007, the twelfth Special Summer Olympic Games will be held in Shanghai. This is the first time for the Special Summer Olympic Games to make its way into a developing country. This will surely further enhance the development of various activities related to the Special Olympics and promote China's efforts in safeguarding the rights and interests of persons with disabilities. In order to present the Shanghai Special Olympics to the world, the Permanent Mission of China to the United Nations, in concert with the Municipal Government of Shanghai, the International Committee for Special Olympic Games, the Preparatory Committee of the Special Olympic Games in Shanghai and the United Nations New York Sport Office, will organize a thematic forum, reception and photo exhibition next Friday, 10 November. We look forward to the active participation of all delegations and representatives of the Secretariat.

As pointed out in the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1), sport can foster peace and development and contribute to an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding. The Chinese delegation wishes to reiterate on this occasion that we are ready to join other Member States in working for the cause of sport for development and peace. We will integrate it into our vision of building a harmonious society and, working on that basis, contribute to our joint efforts for international peace, development and prosperity.

**Ms. Picco** (Monaco) (*spoke in French*): First of all, allow me to thank the Secretary-General for his report in which he presented the United Nations Plan of Action on Sport for Development and Peace (A/61/373) that we will be endorsing at the end of our meeting. We would also like to congratulate the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General and the members of the Office of Sport for Development and Peace for the work that they have carried out and, specifically, for the success of the Global Youth Leadership Summit which has just concluded in New York.

Any initiative which seeks to implement the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) should be welcomed. Sport, as a vector for development and peace, transcends generations, cultures and beliefs.

On the initiative of its Princess, and in particular His Serene Highness Prince Albert II, who is a member of the International Olympic Committee and an accomplished athlete who has participated at five Olympic Games, the Principality of Monaco has always promoted sports as an instrument for peace, for example, through the Olympic truce.

We therefore welcome, with great satisfaction, the due recognition of the role of physical education and sport in promoting the basic values and principles of solidarity, tolerance, a culture of peace, gender equality, the recognition of special needs of the handicapped and the intercultural dialogue, values also continue in the Charter of our Organization. Sport, like culture, is an extraordinary means for human beings to communicate. We believe that sport is one of the necessary elements for a true alliance of civilizations.

In addition, the participation of world-renowned champions who are admired by all as goodwill ambassadors is an exceptional tool because they can, better than anyone, transmit the ideals of the United Nations to youth and promote the MDGs.

The Principality of Monaco organizes many world-renowned sports events. During these competitions, athletes participate in competitions to benefit local non-governmental organizations that work in the field of development. At the initiative of the Economic Youth Chamber of Monaco, a week-long relay race has been organized for many years. This race, known as "No Finish Line", promotes children's rights and is supported by several generations of participants.

Both adults and children are united in their effort to defend a just cause while carrying out a healthy activity. In the preparation of this race, children and their teachers are encouraged to think about the reasons behind the need for the race beyond their family environment.

Every year, the Principality also organizes the Special Olympics Monaco, in which 52 handicapped athletes in 8 European teams inspire spectators' admiration. In October 2007, our Special Olympics delegation will participate in the Special Olympic Games in Shanghai.

In 2007, Monaco will host the Games of the Small States of Europe, an event created in 1984, which welcomes athletes from eight small European States in the best competitive spirit. We hope that this event, which receives the sponsorship of the International Olympic Committee, will allow us to demonstrate the role of sport for peace and development.

**Mr. Muñoz** (Chile) (*spoke in Spanish*): I take the floor to stress our support for the draft resolution entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace" (A/61/L.12). Chile has been very enthusiastic in supporting the consensus at this General Assembly because we are convinced that sport is an effective vehicle to promote not just peace and development, but also to contribute to creating an environment of tolerance and dialogue which are so necessary in the world today.

We would therefore like to congratulate Tunisia on its work in putting forward this new draft resolution. Here, we would like to stress our interest in the Plan of Action put forward by the Secretary-General in his report "Sport for Development and peace: the way forward" (A/61/343), which we consider an excellent tool for guidance over the next three years which will allow us not just to bring together the efforts of Governments, civil society and multilateral organizations, but also to expand and strengthen plans and programmes that are being implemented in these fields within each of our countries.

The Plan of Action should also help us to promote a world culture of sport among young people, adults and the elderly, including, of course, handicapped athletes — men, women and children, inhabitants of developed and developing countries — so as to improve their quality of life and contribute to a less violent, healthier and more tolerant world. We think we need fewer bullets and more balls to use for sports, less conflict and more sports cooperation for peace and development.

At this point, I would like to acknowledge the role of Mr. Adolph Ogi, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, as well as Mr. Djibril Diallo, Director of the New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace.

I would also like to recall that, from the beginning, Chile has been promoting these shared objectives. These objectives have been included in the initiative in my country of incorporating paragraph 145 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome (resolution 60/1) which refers to the need to stress that sports can foster peace and development among all of our peoples.

What has been done so far is important, but there is still much to be done. We favour establishing partnerships to mobilize resources and to build national capacity, particularly together with the private sector and civil society. In this connection, foundations, non-governmental organizations and sports federations play a central role.

Chile believes firmly that adopting this draft resolution could provide an excellent platform to fully implement the international development objectives as stated in the Millennium Declaration. As an active member of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace, Chile is pleased with the work completed during 2006 and believes that, in order to capitalize on these accomplishments, we need more specific initiatives that will allow us to integrate sports in plans and programmes for development and peace, both in the national and international spheres. We commit ourselves to continue to work actively together with others in achieving these noble objectives.

**Mr. Zheglov** (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): Sport, peace and development are closely interrelated concepts. The absence of war is an essential condition for competitive sport. Sport brings peoples closer together; the spirit of competition in sport does not mean combat between enemies, but working with partners in the general quest for development. In a globalized world that is facing new challenges and threats and in which dialogue between civilizations is essential, we believe that international cooperation in sports can play an important role in combating national and religious hatred and in strengthening the world community. As a powerful educational tool for developing mutual respect and tolerance, sport can be a factor in combating terrorist ideologies and intolerance. This was evident in the concrete outcomes of the International Year of Sports and Physical Education, which helped to address a number of social and economic issues. In the framework of the International Year of Sport, an international conference on sport and peace was held in Moscow; it gave fresh momentum to international efforts to prevent conflict, to reject enmity and aggression and to promote peace and harmony.

The President and the Government of the Russian Federation consider the dissemination in our country of the humanist values of sport to be of great importance. With that objective in mind, in January 2006 Russia adopted a federal programme for the development of physical education and sport. The programme aims to increase threefold the number of individuals participating in sport and significantly develop sports infrastructure. We attach particular importance to disseminating the high ideals of sport and the Olympic movement among children and young people. The number of important international sporting events being held in Russia is increasing. In 2006, our country hosted the world championships in track and field and women's soccer and European championships in wrestling and shooting, as well as the world and European championships in water polo, judo and freestyle. We are now focusing on our bid to host the 2014 Winter Olympic Games and the Paralympic Games in Sochi. We believe that holding the Olympics in our country will promote the development of the Olympic movement.

Russia particularly welcomes the activities of the United Nations in strengthening international cooperation in the area of competitive sports and in reaffirming the ideals of sport. We welcome the joint initiatives of the United Nations and the International Olympic Committee aimed at promoting the development of sport and physical education, developing education and health programmes, protecting the environment, combating hunger and promoting the advancement of women. Supporting sports, especially at the policy level, can help countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We welcome the Secretary-General's report on sport for development and peace (A/61/373). Russia is a sponsor of draft resolution A/61/L.12, introduced by Tunisia and entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace". We appeal for support for that constructive document.

We thank Mr. Adolf Ogi, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, for the active role that he has played. We are ready to continue our fruitful collaboration with the Special Adviser and fully support the continued operation of the New York Office for Sport for Development and Peace, headed by Mr. Djibril Diallo.

Sport is a universal language of communication. As participants in sporting events include people from various countries, cultures and faiths, it would appear that "sports diplomacy" has great potential and can become an effective medium for promoting a culture of peace and dialogue among civilizations. As Pierre de Courbetin said, sport is a true ambassador for peace, a bridge to establish friendship and mutual understanding among peoples. We must make full use of that potential.

**Mr. Løvald** (Norway): It is widely acknowledged that sport can contribute to an atmosphere of tolerance and understanding. Sport and physical education can present opportunities for solidarity and cooperation in order to promote tolerance, a culture of peace, social and gender equality, adequate resources for the special needs of persons with disabilities, intercultural dialogue and social cohesion.

The International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005 generated considerable attention in terms of the relevance of sports for peace and development. The momentum created as a result of the International Year provides a good basis for important follow-up. A key aspect in this regard will be the strengthening of the clear linkage between the opportunity to participate in sport and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the broader goals of sustainable development and peace.

Sports-based initiatives should be among the efforts to achieve the MDGs. The integration and mainstreaming of sport for development and peace in development programmes and policies are key in this regard. Norway supports the strategy that "sport for all" should be the basis for the systematic use of sport for development and peace. The most effective way to promote sport for all is through schools. Sport must be integrated into education plans in schools at all levels.

The United Nations has a clear role in implementing the agenda of sports for development and peace. The United Nations should promote the implementation of partnerships, initiatives and development projects. Partnerships have proved to be a useful approach in advancing and coordinating sport for development and peace. Partnerships can also lay the groundwork for the cost-effective integration of sports for development and peace into national development policies and programmes.

Sport programmes should be initiated to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. Concerted efforts should be made to move positions

forward on women and sport. The follow-up process should be more systematic and effective in order to support a gender perspective. Intensified efforts in the area of sports should also be used to promote greater awareness and action to foster peace. In this regard, the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000), on women and peace and security, is important.

Norway supports the United Nations Action Plan on Sport for Development and Peace, presented in the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/373). The aim of the Action Plan is to realize the full potential of sport as a powerful, cost-effective way of supporting Member States in achieving the MDGs by 2015 and in attaining the broader goals of sustainable development and lasting peace. The intention is to expand and strengthen partnerships and sport for development and peace programmes and projects, as well as advocacy and communications activities.

In this respect I would like to emphasize the important work done by civil society. In particular, Norway has been proud to support Right To Play, an international humanitarian non-governmental organization headed by the Norwegian four-time Olympic gold medallist Johann Olav Koss, with programmes in close to 30 countries. We are equally impressed by the Mathare Youth Sports Association in Kenya and its work for children and youth in slum areas.

Norway would also like to praise the work of the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Adolf Ogi, for his dedication to these issues. He has indeed played a key role in promoting this important agenda.

**Mr. Spatafora** (Italy): Let me start by thanking my colleague and friend, Ambassador Hachani of Tunisia, for his initiative to introduce this important draft resolution once again this year.

Let there be no doubt as to the strong support of the Government of Italy for this new area of activities of the United Nations — support that was recently renewed by our Minister for Sport and Youth in her statement at the opening of the youth leadership summit that took place in this very Hall last Sunday, organized by the United Nations New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace.

Italy is actively involved in the work of the Group of Friends of Sport for Development and Peace. I would like here to commend the efforts of the Office of Sport for Development and Peace, under the passionate and committed leadership of the Special Adviser, Mr. Ogi, and of Mr. Djibril Diallo, who deserve our warmest and most sincere thanks. Let me recall here that the former President of the General Assembly, Mr. Eliasson, used to say that without passion, nothing happens in life, and without compassion, the wrong things happen. Well, I must say that Djibril Diallo, the Director of the new United Nations Office, truly shows that passion and that compassion.

Italy is happy to be a sponsor of this draft resolution, as it was last year. I do not want to repeat here what I said last year on this subject, which has also been stated very eloquently by other colleagues who spoke earlier this evening. We all know and acknowledge to what extent sport is a new and important tool for achieving the goals of the United Nations in the field of peace, development, education and health.

We have achieved a broad consensus on the basis of our strategy in this field; what we need now is action.

What I wish to stress here today is the fact that the responsibility for implementing this draft resolution, once adopted, now lies with Member States and the United Nations system. The draft makes specific requests for action by all Member States. We are all called by the resolution to put in place concrete operational initiatives in order to translate into reality the United Nations strategy in this field.

We are called to mainstream sport for development in our development programmes in order to apply the benefits of this strategy directly in, for example, least developed countries. We are in particular called to assist the least developed countries in their capacity-building efforts in sports programmes.

We are called also to promote new funding and arrangements in taking forward this strategy, and, finally, we are called to mobilize our civil society through the engagement of sport organizations, athletes and the private sector.

We are the United Nations. What is at stake is our credibility — the credibility of the General Assembly and of its revitalized role. When we all meet again in this Hall next year to review the situation, we will have

to produce evidence of concrete progress and action in this field. We will have to show that we have delivered and that we are delivering because we have a vision and the political will to go on implementing it.

**Mr. Psiachas** (Greece): Greece proudly co-sponsored the draft resolution on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace. In addition, Greece continues to promote the idea of the Olympic Truce, a noble cause dating back to our antiquity.

The international community is becoming increasingly aware of the unique position of sport to spread the message of peace and foster development. Greece, which last hosted the Olympic Games in their birthplace and, incidentally, currently holds the titles of European champion in both football and basketball, fully supports the Secretary-General's Action Plan and looks forward to developing synergies among Governments, sport-related organizations, and the private sector.

Greece would like in that regard to convey its sincere thanks and congratulations to the Special Adviser on Sport for Development and Peace, as well as to the Office of Sport for Development and Peace, for their bold initiatives in this area.

**Mr. Lutterotti** (Austria): Sport is indeed — as Secretary-General Kofi Annan said — a universal language and a powerful tool that brings people together, no matter what their origin, background, religious beliefs or economic status.

Austria strongly believes in the power of sport to contribute to development and peace. Sport is an effective and low-cost means of promoting the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, to which Austria is fully committed. We note with satisfaction that the International Year for Sport and Physical Education in 2005 created an important momentum worldwide. That momentum was reinforced by the recent youth leadership summit held in New York. Now it is up to us to build upon this momentum. In this perspective, we welcome the report of the Secretary-General and his Action Plan. Sports as a means for peace and development must remain high on our agenda.

We wish to commend the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace, Mr. Adolf Ogi, for his tireless, energetic and action-oriented efforts. We hope that he will continue to serve in this capacity in the future with the support of the United Nations system. Our special thanks also go to the New York Office of Sport for Development and Peace, under the able leadership of Mr. Djibril Diallo.

Austria welcomes draft resolution A/61/L.12 on "Sports as a means to promote education, health, development and peace". We thank Tunisia for its efforts in drafting and negotiating the draft resolution. My delegation is pleased to be a co-sponsor.

**The Acting President**: The Assembly will now take action on draft resolution A/61/L.12, entitled "Sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace".

There are four additional sponsors: Cameroon, Mauritius, Portugal and the United Arab Emirates.

May I take it that the Assembly decides to adopt draft resolution A/61/L.12?

*Draft resolution A/61/L.12 was adopted* (resolution 61/10).

**The Acting President**: May I take it that it is the wish of the Assembly to conclude its consideration of agenda item 49?

*It was so decided.*

**Programme of work**

**The Acting President** (*spoke in Arabic*): I should like to inform Member States that, at the request of the sponsor, consideration of agenda item 45, entitled "The role of the United Nations in promoting a new global human order", has been postponed to a later date.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*